

I would like to take this opportunity to record the effect of this policy on my life and that of my natural parents.

My adoption was a happy one in that I was sent to a kind and good family who welcomed me with open arms. They provided love, security and education. The remaining aunts, uncles and cousins of that family are still my family.

In 1984 after the death of my adoptive mother and the remarriage of my father I set about searching for my birth mother. After 3 months I located her in a Victorian country town where she had married my natural father two and a half years after my birth. Efforts by her mother to locate me failed. The law had placed me outside their lives.

My adoption was totally against the wishes of my father who had wanted to marry my mother. My mother reluctantly signed the adoption papers as she was totally overwhelmed by her determined mother, a system that told her she had no rights and workers within the system who used the law to cast judgement in cruel and vindictive ways.

My parents got on with their lives nurturing two more children. When I contacted them in 1984 they had buried the trauma of "that terrible business". My arrival had the capacity to upset their lives. The success of our relationship is due to their willingness, after the shock subsided, to acknowledge the truth to all the members of their family. They told their parents, their children and their brothers and sisters. My mother found the courage to tell her mother who, in turn, apologised to me.

We have enjoyed almost 27 years of love, laughter, friendship interspersed with deep and painful sadness. As my parents get older I notice they more often express feelings of guilt that won't go away. While I have accepted their explanation that there was nothing they could do to keep me as part of their lives, I believe that they find it harder to accept as the years go on.

I recently heard of a woman who proclaimed of her imminent death, "At least it will stop the regret." The feelings associated with forced separation live on in those who experienced it.

For me, while I am happy in and with both my families, I can feel alienated in each of them. Nothing can replace the early years of a child and my natural parents missed that with me. Living with an adoptive family there are issues of not fitting in, not looking like them and not being understood for who you are. Meeting my natural family filled in many missing pieces of my identity. Yet there are family stories within which I have no place. I can feel like an outsider in each family.

I have often thought of myself as a “stolen” child. I live with the scars of not being allowed to grow up with my natural parents. I worry about the scars they live with. This is why I am pleased to be able to record my experience for this inquiry. An apology would be a symbolic gesture.